

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2025

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HOUSE BILL 831

Short Title: Comm. Inspect. Efficiency Act. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Brody, Zenger, B. Jones, and Pyrtle (Primary Sponsors).
For a complete list of sponsors, refer to the North Carolina General Assembly web site.

Referred to: Housing and Development, if favorable, Finance, if favorable, Rules, Calendar,
and Operations of the House

April 10, 2025

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT TO AUTHORIZE INSPECTIONS BY PRIVATE INSPECTORS OF COMMERCIAL
BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES FOR COMPLIANCE WITH THE NORTH
CAROLINA STATE BUILDING CODE, EXPEDITE LOCAL GOVERNMENT
APPROVAL OF SEALED COMMERCIAL AND MULTIFAMILY BUILDING PLANS,
AND REPEAL THE MARKETPLACE POOL OF CODE-ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS
WITHIN THE OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1.(a) G.S. 143-151.8(a) reads as rewritten:

"§ 143-151.8. Definitions.

(a) As used in this Article, unless the context otherwise requires:

...

(4a) Private commercial inspection. – An inspection by a private commercial inspector of the manner of construction, workmanship, and materials for the construction of commercial buildings and structures, including their components and elements, for compliance with the North Carolina State Building Code, except those sections of the Code which pertain to boilers and elevators which the State Department of Labor engages in the administration and enforcement of those sections.

(4b) Private commercial inspection firm. – A corporation, partnership, limited liability company, sole proprietorship, or other legal business entity registered pursuant to this Article that employs or contracts with one or more licensed private commercial inspectors to engage in the practice of private commercial inspection.

(4c) Private commercial inspector. – An individual qualified through certification and registration pursuant to this Article to engage in the practice of private commercial inspections. A private commercial inspector may be self-employed or employed by a registered private commercial inspection firm.

...."

SECTION 1.(b) G.S. 143-151.12 reads as rewritten:

"§ 143-151.12. Powers.

In addition to powers conferred upon the Board elsewhere in this Article, the Board has the power to do the following:



- (1) Adopt rules necessary to administer this Article.
- (1a) Require State agencies, local inspection departments, and local governing bodies to submit reports and information about the employment, education, and training of Code-enforcement officials.
- (2) Establish minimum standards for employment as a Code-enforcement official: (i) in probationary or temporary status, and (ii) in permanent positions.
- (3) Certify ~~persons~~ individuals as being qualified under the provisions of this Article to be Code-enforcement officials, including ~~persons~~ individuals employed by a federally recognized Indian Tribe to perform inspections on tribal lands.
- (3a) Certify individuals as being qualified under the provisions of this Article to be private commercial inspectors for the purposes of conducting private commercial inspections and register private commercial inspectors and private commercial inspection firms pursuant to this Article.
- (4) Consult and cooperate with counties, municipalities, agencies of this State, other governmental agencies, and with universities, colleges, junior colleges, community colleges and other institutions concerning the development of Code-enforcement training or private commercial inspector schools and programs or courses of instruction.
- (5) Establish minimum standards and levels of education or equivalent experience for all Code-enforcement or private commercial inspector instructors, teachers or professors.
- (5a) Ensure that the minimum standards for and education of private commercial inspectors include specific instruction on the duties and responsibilities imposed by law on a private commercial inspector.
- (6) Conduct and encourage research by public and private agencies that shall be designed to improve education and training in the administration of Code ~~enforcement~~ enforcement or private commercial inspection.
- (7) Adopt and amend bylaws, consistent with law, for its internal management and control; appoint advisory committees as necessary; and enter into contracts and do other things as necessary and incidental to the exercise of its authority pursuant to this Article.
- (8) Make recommendations concerning any matters within its purview pursuant to this Article.
- (9) ~~Establish within the Office of the State Fire Marshal a marketplace pool of qualified Code-enforcement officials available for the following purposes:~~
 - a. ~~When requested by the State Fire Marshal, to assist in the discharge of the State Fire Marshal's duty under G.S. 143-139 to supervise, administer, and enforce the North Carolina State Building Code. The State Fire Marshal shall have the power and authority to fix and collect reasonable fees for services performed by Code-enforcement officials under this sub-subdivision. The State Fire Marshal may also collect reimbursement, at the rate established under G.S. 138-6, for mileage costs incurred by Code-enforcement officials going to and from inspections conducted under this sub-subdivision. The State Fire Marshal shall have no power or authority to fix or collect fees incurred by local inspection departments under sub-subdivision b. of this subdivision.~~
 - b. ~~When requested by local inspection departments, to assist in Code enforcement.~~

(10) Establish criteria to be used by the Office of the State Fire Marshal to verify that private commercial inspectors meet the standards required for private commercial inspections."

SECTION 1.(c) G.S. 143-151.14 reads as rewritten:

"§ 143-151.14. Comity.

...

(a1) The Board may, without requiring an examination, grant a standard private commercial inspector certificate as a qualified private commercial inspector for a particular type of position and level to any individual who, at the time of application, is certified as the equivalent of a private commercial inspector, in good standing by a similar board of another state, district, or territory where standards are acceptable to the Board and not lower than those required by this Article for a similar type of position and level in this State.

...

(b1) The Board may, without requiring an examination, grant a standard private commercial inspector certificate as a qualified private commercial inspector for a particular type of position and level to any individual who, at the time of application, is certified as the equivalent of a private commercial inspector, in good standing by the International Code Council where standards and examination are acceptable to the Board and not lower than those required by this Article for a type of position and level in this State.

(c) The certificates granted under subsections ~~(a) and (b)~~ (a), (a1), (b), and (b1) of this section shall expire after three years unless within that time period the holder completes a short course, as prescribed by the Board, relating to the State Building Code regulations and Code-enforcement administration.

...."

SECTION 1.(d) Article 9C of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 143-151.14A. Required standards and certificates for private commercial inspectors.

(a) No individual shall engage in private commercial inspection under this Article unless that individual possesses a standard private commercial inspector certificate, currently valid, issued by the Board attesting to that individual's qualifications to engage in private commercial inspection. To obtain a standard private commercial inspector certificate, an individual must pass an examination, as prescribed by the Board or by a contracting party under G.S. 143-151.16(d), that is based on the North Carolina State Building Code and administrative procedures required for Code enforcement or private commercial inspection. The Board may issue a standard private commercial inspector certificate of qualification to each individual who successfully completes the examination.

(b) The private commercial inspector certificate authorizes that individual, upon registration as provided in G.S. 143-151.19A, to engage in private commercial inspection and to practice as a qualified private commercial inspector in North Carolina. The private commercial inspector certificate of qualification shall bear the signatures of the chairman and secretary of the Board.

(c) The Board shall issue one or more standard private commercial inspector certificates to each private commercial inspector demonstrating the qualifications set forth in subsection (a) of this section. Standard private commercial inspector certificates are available for each of the following types of qualified private commercial inspectors:

- (1) Building inspector.
- (2) Electrical inspector.
- (3) Mechanical inspector.
- (4) Plumbing inspector.
- (5) Fire inspector.

(d) The holder of a standard private commercial inspector certificate may only conduct private commercial inspections within the inspection area and level described upon the certificate issued by the Board; however, for any area in which the private commercial inspector is not certified, that private commercial inspector may contract with a private commercial inspector who is certified in that area to conduct the necessary inspection. A private commercial inspector may qualify and hold one or more private commercial inspector certificates. These private commercial inspector certificates may be for different levels in different types of positions as defined in this section and in rules adopted by the Board.

(e) A private commercial inspector holding a certificate indicating a specified level of proficiency in a particular type of position may conduct a private commercial inspection calling for that type of qualification anywhere in the State. With respect to all types of private commercial inspectors, those with Level II or Level III certificates shall be qualified to inspect and approve only those types and sizes of commercial buildings and structures as specified in rules adopted by the Board.

(f) Notwithstanding subsection (a) of this section, the Board shall, without requiring an examination, issue a standard Level II private commercial inspector certificate to all of the following but may only issue a standard Level III private commercial inspector certificate to those of the following who pass the examination:

(1) Any individual who is currently certified as a Code-enforcement official under this Article.

(2) An architect licensed under Chapter 83A of the General Statutes.

(g) Architects sitting for the Level III private commercial inspector examination are exempt from any required prerequisite exam classes.

(h) Notwithstanding subsection (a) of this section, the Board shall, without requiring an examination, issue a standard Level II or Level III private commercial inspector certificate to any engineer licensed under Chapter 89C of the General Statutes."

SECTION 1.(e) Article 9C of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 143-151.14B. Professional development program for private commercial inspectors.

(a) The Board may establish professional development requirements for private commercial inspectors as a condition of the renewal or reactivation of their certificates. The purposes of these professional development requirements are to assist private commercial inspectors in maintaining professional competence in their inspections and to assure the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of North Carolina. A private commercial inspector subject to this section shall present evidence to the Board at each certificate renewal after initial certification that during the 12 months before the certificate expiration date, the private commercial inspector has completed the required number of credit hours in courses approved by the Board. Annual continuing education hour requirements shall be determined by the Board but shall not be more than six credit hours. For licensed architects and engineers issued a standard private commercial inspector certificate under G.S. 143-151.14A, the Board shall develop a continuing education program. The Board shall include in these requirements a two-hour update course on laws, regulations, or other issues that have changed over the previous year, including Code amendments, revised standards of practice, or changes in professional guidelines.

(b) The Board may require an individual who earns a certificate under programs established in G.S. 143-151.14A to complete professional development courses.

(c) As a condition of reactivating a standard certificate, the Board may require the completion of professional development courses within one year after reemployment as a private commercial inspector as follows:

(1) An individual who has been on inactive status for more than two years and who has not been continuously employed by a city or county inspection department, a private commercial inspection firm, or engaged in the business

of private commercial inspections during the period of inactive status shall complete professional development courses for each technical area in which the individual is certified.

(2) An individual who has been on inactive status for more than two years and who has been continuously employed by a city or county inspection department, and actively engaged in Level II or Level III inspections shall not be required to complete any professional development courses.

(3) An individual who has been on inactive status for two years or less shall complete professional development courses per the Board's requirements.

(d) The Board may, for good cause shown, grant extensions of time to private commercial inspectors to comply with these requirements. A private commercial inspector who, after obtaining an extension under this subsection, offers evidence satisfactory to the Board that the private commercial inspector has satisfactorily completed the required professional development courses is in compliance with this section.

(e) The Board may adopt rules to implement this section, including rules that govern:

(1) The content and subject matter of professional development courses.

(2) The criteria, standards, and procedures for the approval of courses, course sponsors, and course instructors.

(3) The methods of instruction.

(4) The computation of course credit.

(5) The ability to carry forward course credit from one year to another.

(6) The waiver of or variance from the professional development required for hardship or other reasons.

(7) The procedures for compliance and sanctions for noncompliance."

SECTION 1.(f) G.S. 143-151.15 reads as rewritten:

"§ 143-151.15. Return of certificate to Board; reissuance by Board.

(a) A certificate issued by the Board under this Article is valid as long as the person individual certified is employed by any of the following:

(1) Employed by the State of North Carolina or any political subdivision thereof as a Code-enforcement official, or is employed official at the required level.

(2) Employed by a federally recognized Indian Tribe to perform inspections on tribal lands as a Code-enforcement official.

(3) Employed by a registered private commercial inspection firm.

(4) Self-employed as a private commercial inspector.

(b) When the person individual certified leaves that employment described under subsection (a) of this section for any reason, he that individual shall return the certificate to the Board. If the person individual subsequently obtains employment as a Code-enforcement official in any governmental jurisdiction described above, described under subsection (a) of this section, the Board may reissue the certificate to him that person.

(c) The provisions of G.S. 143-151.16(b) relating to renewal fees and late renewals shall apply, if appropriate. The provisions of G.S. 143-151.16(c) shall not apply. This section does not affect the Board's powers under G.S. 143-151.17."

SECTION 1.(g) G.S. 143-151.16 reads as rewritten:

"§ 143-151.16. Certification fees; renewal of certificates; examination fees.

(a) The Board shall establish a schedule of fees to be paid by each applicant for certification as a qualified Code-enforcement official. Such fee official or as a private commercial inspector. The fees shall not exceed twenty dollars (\$20.00) for each applicant, the following:

(1) For certification as a qualified Code-enforcement official, twenty dollars (\$20.00).

(2) For certification as a private commercial inspector, two hundred dollars (\$200.00).

(b) A certificate, other than a probationary certificate, as a qualified Code-enforcement official or as a private commercial inspector issued pursuant to the provisions of this Article must be renewed annually on or before the first day of July. Each application for renewal must be accompanied by a renewal fee to be determined by the Board, but not to exceed ~~ten dollars (\$10.00)~~ the amounts set out below. The Board is authorized to charge an extra four dollar (\$4.00) per day late renewal fee for renewals made after the first day of July each year. The maximum renewal application fees are:

(1) For a qualified Code-enforcement official, ten dollars (\$10.00).

(2) For a private commercial inspector, fifty dollars (\$50.00).

(c) Any ~~person~~ individual who fails to renew his or her certificate for a period of two consecutive years may be required by the Board to take and pass the same examination as unlicensed applicants before allowing such person to renew his or her certificate.

(d) The Board may contract with persons for the development and administration of the examinations required by ~~G.S. 143-151.13(a)~~, G.S. 143-151.13(a) and G.S. 143-151.14A for course development related to the examinations, for review of a particular applicant's examination, and for other related services. The person with whom the Board contracts may charge applicants a reasonable fee for the costs associated with the development and administration of the examinations, for course development related to the examinations, for review of the applicant's examinations, and for other related services. The fee shall be agreed to by the Board and the other contracting party. The amount of the fee under this subsection shall not exceed one hundred seventy-five dollars (\$175.00). Contracts for the development and administration of the examinations, for course development related to the examinations, and for review of examinations shall not be subject to Article 3, 3C, or 8 of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes or to Article 15 of Chapter 143B of the General Statutes. However, the Board shall: (i) submit all proposed contracts for supplies, materials, printing, equipment, and contractual services that exceed one million dollars (\$1,000,000) authorized by this subsection to the Attorney General or the Attorney General's designee for review as provided in G.S. 114-8.3; and (ii) include in all proposed contracts to be awarded by the Board under this subsection a standard clause which provides that the State Auditor and internal auditors of the Board may audit the records of the contractor during and after the term of the contract to verify accounts and data affecting fees and performance. The Board shall not award a cost plus percentage of cost agreement or contract for any purpose.

(e) A person, firm, corporation, or other entity intending to hire or contract with an individual for the purpose of performing private commercial inspections may pay any certification or recertification fee on behalf of that individual, regardless of whether that individual is already certified as a private commercial inspector or is seeking initial certification."

SECTION 1.(h) G.S. 143-151.17 reads as rewritten:

"§ 143-151.17. Grounds for disciplinary actions; investigation; administrative procedures.

...

(a1) A private commercial inspector shall not inspect any property under this Article in which the inspector, or a person with whom the inspector has a close familial, business, or other associational relationship, has an ownership or direct financial interest. For purposes of this section, a "close familial relationship" means a spouse, parent, child, brother, sister, grandparent, or grandchild. The term includes the step, half, and in-law relationships.

(b) The Board may investigate the actions of any qualified Code-enforcement ~~official~~ official, private commercial inspector, or any applicant therefor, upon the verified complaint in writing of any person alleging a violation of subsection (a) of this section. The Board may suspend, revoke, or demote to a lower level any certificate of any qualified Code-enforcement official and refuse to grant a certificate to any applicant, whom it finds to have been guilty of one or more of the actions set out in subsection (a) of this section as grounds for disciplinary action.

...

(e) This section applies to Code-enforcement ~~officials~~officials, private commercial ~~inspectors~~inspectors, and applicants who are employed or seek to be employed by a federally recognized Indian Tribe to perform inspections on tribal lands."

SECTION 1.(i) G.S. 143-151.18 reads as rewritten:

"§ 143-151.18. Violations; penalty; injunction.

On and after July 1, 1979, it shall be unlawful for any person to represent ~~himself~~themselves as a qualified Code-enforcement official or private commercial inspector who does not hold a currently valid certificate of qualification issued by the Board. Further, it shall be unlawful for any person to practice Code enforcement or conduct private commercial inspections except as allowed by any currently valid certificate issued to that person by the Board. Any person violating any of the provisions of this Article shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor. The Board is authorized to apply to any judge of the superior court for an injunction in order to prevent any violation or threatened violation of the provisions of this Article."

SECTION 1.(j) G.S. 143-151.19 reads as rewritten:

"§ 143-151.19. Administration.

...

(c) The Board shall keep current a record of the names and addresses of all qualified Code-enforcement officials and private commercial inspectors and any additional personal data as the Board deems necessary. The Board annually shall publish a list of all currently certified Code-enforcement ~~officials~~officials and private commercial inspectors. The Board shall post the list on its official website and make it publicly accessible.

...

(e) The Board shall issue a duplicate certificate to practice as a qualified Code-enforcement official or private commercial inspector in place of one which has been lost, destroyed, or mutilated upon proper application and payment of a fee to be determined by the Board."

SECTION 1.(k) Article 9C of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 143-151.19A. Registration of private commercial inspectors and private commercial inspection firms.

(a) A person shall not engage in private commercial inspection unless that person is certified pursuant to G.S. 143-151.14A and registered under this section. A private commercial inspection firm shall not engage in private commercial inspection unless that firm is registered under this section and employs or contracts with one or more private commercial inspectors certified pursuant to G.S. 143-151.14A.

(b) To be registered, an applicant, whether an individual or a firm, must submit an application for registration on a form provided by the Board that includes:

(1) The applicant's name and address.

(2) For an individual applicant, proof of the applicant's certification pursuant to this Article.

(3) For a firm applicant, identification of the certified private commercial inspectors employed by or contracted with the firm and the individual designated by the firm as the manager or supervisor responsible for its private commercial inspection personnel and operations.

(4) A statement as to the applicant's experience level in each of the areas in which the applicant plans to conduct or offer inspections.

(5) Any other information required by the Board.

(c) The Board shall review the application for registration required by subsection (b) of this section and shall register and assign the applicant a registration number if it determines the application is adequate and the person otherwise meets the requirements of this Article. If the Board denies an application for registration or the application is deficient, the Board shall notify

the applicant in writing with an explanation for the denial and give the applicant a reasonable opportunity to correct any deficiencies and resubmit the application. If the Board denies the resubmitted application, the applicant shall be notified in writing and may seek review as provided in G.S. 143-151.17(d).

(d) The Board shall keep current a record of the names and addresses of all registered private commercial inspectors and private commercial inspection firms and maintain this record on the Office of the State Fire Marshal's website. The Board may combine the records maintained and published under this subsection with those required in G.S. 143-151.19. The Board may request updates from registered private commercial inspectors or firms registered under this section.

(e) A private commercial inspector or private commercial inspection firm may submit an amended registration to the Board at any time.

(f) The Board shall establish a schedule of fees to be paid by each applicant for registration under this section. Such fee shall not exceed twenty dollars (\$20.00) for each applicant."

SECTION 2.(a) G.S. 160D-402(d) reads as rewritten:

"(d) Financial Support. – The local government may appropriate for the support of the staff any funds that it deems necessary. It shall have power to fix reasonable fees for support, administration, and implementation of programs authorized by this Chapter, and all such fees shall be used for no other purposes. When an inspection, for which the permit holder has paid a fee to the local government, is performed by a ~~marketplace pool Code enforcement official upon request of the State Fire Marshal under G.S. 143-151.12(9)a.~~ private commercial inspector, or private commercial inspection firm, the local government shall promptly return to the permit holder the fee collected by the local government for ~~such that~~ inspection. This subsection applies to the following types of inspection: plumbing, electrical systems, general building restrictions and regulations, heating and air-conditioning, and the general construction of buildings."

SECTION 2.(b) G.S. 160D-403 reads as rewritten:

"§ 160D-403. Administrative development approvals and determinations.

...

(e) Inspections. – Administrative staff may inspect work undertaken pursuant to a development approval to assure that the work is being done in accordance with applicable State and local laws and the terms of the approval. In exercising this power, staff may enter any premises within the jurisdiction of the local government at all reasonable hours for the purposes of inspection or other enforcement action, upon presentation of proper credentials, so long as the appropriate consent has been given for inspection of areas not open to the public or an appropriate inspection warrant has been secured. This subsection shall not apply to work for which a holder has elected to utilize private commercial inspections for inspection of commercial buildings and structures for compliance with the North Carolina State Building Code pursuant to Article 11 of this Chapter.

...

(g) Certificate of Occupancy. – A local government may, upon completion of work or activity undertaken pursuant to a development approval, make final inspections and issue a certificate of compliance or occupancy if staff finds that the completed work complies with all applicable State and local laws and with the terms of the approval. Except as provided in G.S. 160D-1105.2, a local government shall not conduct final inspections of work or activity on commercial buildings or structures for projects under G.S. 160D-1105.1. No building, structure, or use of land that is subject to a building permit required by Article 11 of this Chapter shall be occupied or used until a certificate of occupancy or temporary certificate pursuant to G.S. 160D-1116 has been issued.

...."

SECTION 3.(a) G.S. 160D-1101 reads as rewritten:

1 **"§ 160D-1101. Definitions.**

2 As used in this Article, the following terms shall have their ordinary meaning and shall also
3 be read to include the following:

4 ...

5 (3a) Private commercial inspection. – Shall have the same meaning as in
6 G.S. 143-151.8(a)(4a).

7 (3b) Private commercial inspection firm. – Shall have the same meaning as in
8 G.S. 143-151.8(a)(4b).

9 (3c) Private commercial inspector. – Shall have the same meaning as in
10 G.S. 143-151.8(a)(4b).

11"

12 **SECTION 3.(b)** G.S. 160D-1102 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

13 "(c1) No local government shall adopt or enforce any ordinance prohibiting private
14 commercial inspections by private commercial inspectors or private commercial inspection firms
15 nor shall the Office of the State Fire Marshal prohibit private commercial inspections by private
16 commercial inspectors when the Office of the State Fire Marshal has intervened pursuant to
17 subsection (b) of this section."

18 **SECTION 3.(c)** Article 11 of Chapter 160D of the General Statutes is amended by
19 adding a new section to read:

20 **"§ 160D-1103.1. Qualifications of private commercial inspectors.**

21 No private commercial inspections shall be conducted except by private commercial
22 inspectors qualified under Article 9C of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes."

23 **SECTION 3.(d)** G.S. 160D-1104(b) reads as rewritten:

24 "(b) The duties and responsibilities set forth in subsection (a) of this section include the
25 receipt of applications for permits and the issuance or denial of permits, the making of any
26 necessary inspections in a timely ~~manner, manner~~ except those inspections made by a private
27 commercial inspector, the issuance or denial of certificates of ~~compliance, compliance~~ other than
28 those certificates of compliance with the State Building Code issued or denied by a private
29 commercial inspector, the issuance of orders to correct violations, the bringing of judicial actions
30 against actual or threatened violations, the keeping of adequate records, and any other actions
31 that may be required in order adequately to enforce those laws. The governing board has the
32 authority to enact reasonable and appropriate provisions governing the enforcement of those
33 laws."

34 **SECTION 3.(e)** G.S. 160D-1105 reads as rewritten:

35 **"§ 160D-1105. Other arrangements for inspections.**

36 (a) A local government may contract with an individual who is not a local government
37 employee but who holds one of the applicable certificates as provided in G.S. 160D-1103 or with
38 the employer of an individual who holds one of the applicable certificates as provided in
39 G.S. 160D-1103.

40 (b) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Article, a local government may contract
41 with a certified and registered private commercial inspector or with a registered private
42 commercial inspection firm, as defined and regulated under Article 9C of Chapter 143 of the
43 General Statutes, to conduct inspections under this Article.

44 (c) A permit holder may contract with a private commercial inspector or private
45 commercial inspection firm to conduct private commercial inspections, as provided in
46 G.S. 160D-1105.1, of commercial buildings and structures for compliance with the State
47 Building Code.

48 (d) A Code-enforcement official certified as a private commercial inspector under Article
49 9C of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes and employed by a local government may not be
50 prohibited, by employment contract or otherwise, from engaging in private commercial
51 inspection outside the local government's jurisdiction."

SECTION 3.(f) Article 11 of Chapter 160D of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 160D-1105.1. Private commercial inspection authorized; exceptions.

(a) Notwithstanding the requirements of this Article and except as provided in subsection (d) of this section, a local government and the State Fire Marshal, when the Office of the State Fire Marshal has intervened pursuant to G.S. 160D-1102(b), shall accept and approve, without further responsibility to inspect, a signed inspection report evidencing the inspection of a commercial building or structure by a private commercial inspector provided all of the following apply:

- (1) The private commercial inspection is limited to inspection for compliance with the State Building Code.
- (2) The private commercial inspector submitting the signed inspection report is the individual designated on the permit application or permit amendment under G.S. 160D-1110(c1), or is an individual inspector employed by or contracted with the private commercial inspection firm designated on the permit application or amendment, and the inspection report contains the registration number assigned to that inspector under G.S. 143-151.19A(b). If submitted on behalf of a private commercial inspection firm, the report shall also include the firm's registration number.
- (3) The private commercial inspector conducting the inspection is qualified under the provisions of Article 9C of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes to conduct that private commercial inspection at the time of the inspection.
- (4) If the inspection is conducted on behalf of a private commercial inspection firm, the private commercial inspector who conducted the inspection shall be employed by or under contract with that private commercial inspection firm, and the inspection report may be submitted by the private commercial inspector or by the private commercial inspection firm on the inspector's behalf.
- (5) The private commercial inspector or the private commercial inspection firm provides the local government or the State Fire Marshal, as applicable, with a copy of each signed inspection report. The signed inspection report shall be provided by electronic or physical delivery, and its receipt shall be promptly acknowledged by the local government or the State Fire Marshal, as applicable, through reciprocal means.
- (6) The permit holder has complied with the payment guarantee requirements of G.S. 160D-1105.3.
- (7) The permit holder and the designated private commercial inspector or private commercial inspection firm execute a written contract that shall include, at a minimum, all of the following:
 - a. A requirement that the designated private commercial inspector or firm will be responsible for all required inspections on the commercial building or structure for compliance with the State Building Code.
 - b. The specific types of inspections to be conducted by the designated private commercial inspector or by other private commercial inspectors employed by or contracted with the designated private commercial inspection firm, as applicable.
 - c. The specific types of inspections, if any, to be conducted by those under contract with the private commercial inspection firm.
 - d. The reinspection process, including inspector compensation, when an inspection demonstrates noncompliance with the State Building Code.

- e. The process, including private commercial inspector compensation, to deliver additional inspections required due to unforeseen circumstances, changes to orders, changes to the State Building Code, or any other event or occurrence necessitating additional inspections.
- f. The principal private commercial inspector for the project.

(b) Upon issuing an inspection report receipt as required under subdivision (a)(5) of this section, the local government or State Fire Marshal, its inspection departments, and its inspectors shall be immune from and discharged and released from any liabilities, duties, and responsibilities imposed by this Article with respect to or in common law from any claim arising out of or attributed to the inspection for which the inspection report was submitted pursuant to this section.

(c) The inspection report required by this section shall be on the form developed by the North Carolina Code Officials Qualification Board in the Office of the State Fire Marshal under G.S. 160D-1105.5 and shall include the following:

- (1) The printed name, title, signature, and date of the private commercial inspector who conducted the inspection.
- (2) The registration number of the private commercial inspector issued pursuant to G.S. 143-151.19A. If the inspection was conducted on behalf of a private commercial inspection firm, the name and registration number of the firm shall also be included.
- (3) The street address of the building or structure inspected.
- (4) The permit number.
- (5) The type of inspections conducted.
- (6) Whether the result of each inspection type conducted is pass or fail, as applicable."

SECTION 3.(g) Article 11 of Chapter 160D of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 160D-1105.2. Fire prevention systems acceptance testing.

Nothing in this Article shall be construed to prevent a local government, prior to issuing a certificate of occupancy, from conducting acceptance testing or approving any fire prevention systems for which a private commercial inspector has issued a certificate of compliance."

SECTION 3.(h) Article 11 of Chapter 160D of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 160D-1105.3. Private commercial inspection payment guarantee.

(a) Prior to issuing or amending a building permit in which the applicant indicates an intent to use a private commercial inspector or private commercial inspection firm, the local government shall require the applicant to provide a payment guarantee in the amount of one hundred twenty-five percent (125%) of the local government's estimated cost to inspect the entire project itself. The purpose of the payment guarantee is to provide a means of compensating the local government for the costs of any inspections it must conduct under subsection (c) of this section and shall be in one of the following forms:

- (1) A payment bond or surety bond issued by one or more surety companies legally authorized to do business in this State.
- (2) A letter of credit issued by a financial institution licensed to do business in this State.
- (3) An insurance policy approved by the Commissioner of Insurance providing a payment guarantee.

(b) The payment guarantee in subsection (a) of this section shall be executed in favor of the local government and shall become effective upon the issuance of the building permit. A copy of any insurance policy or financial instrument used to satisfy this section shall be provided to the Commissioner of Insurance.

(c) If for any reason a private commercial inspector or private commercial inspection firm ceases inspecting or otherwise abandons a project, the local government issuing the permit shall, at the written request of the permit holder, be responsible for inspecting the project from the point in time of the last private commercial inspection.

(d) Local governments required to begin inspecting commercial projects under subsection (b) of this section may claim against the payment bond for the costs of inspecting the project or may seek payment from the permit holder for whom the local government conducted the inspections."

SECTION 3.(i) Article 11 of Chapter 160D of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 160D-1105.5. Uniform forms for private commercial inspection.

(a) The North Carolina Code Officials Qualification Board in the Office of the State Fire Marshal shall develop the following uniform forms used for private commercial inspections:

(1) Inspection reports required under G.S. 160D-1105.1(a) that are specific to the type of inspection being conducted.

(2) Notice of intent to use a private commercial inspector that contains the information required under G.S. 160D-1110(c1).

(3) Certificate of compliance with the State Building Code under G.S. 160D-1116.

(b) No local government may require information on the forms developed under this section other than that contained on the form."

SECTION 3.(j) G.S. 160D-1109 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

"(c) A member of the inspection department shall not be in violation of this section when the local government, its inspection department, or one of the inspectors issues an inspection report receipt for or receives an inspection report evidencing compliance with the applicable North Carolina State Building Code from a private commercial inspector in accordance with this Article."

SECTION 3.(k) G.S. 160D-1110 reads as rewritten:

"§ 160D-1110. Building permits.

...

(c1) Applicants for a building permit or permit amendment under this section who opt to use a private commercial inspector or private commercial inspection firm to conduct all inspections to determine compliance with the State Building Code shall attach as an addendum to their permit application or amendment a notice of intent to use a private commercial inspector or private commercial inspection firm on the entire project. The notice of intent must contain the contact information for the designated private commercial inspector or private commercial inspection firm. If a private commercial inspection firm is designated, the notice must also include the contact information and registration number of the supervising or managing private commercial inspector for the project. Contact information shall include name, physical and mailing address, email address, telephone number, and the applicable registration numbers assigned under G.S. 143-151.19A(b). Notwithstanding a notice of intent to use a private commercial inspector or firm for a commercial development project, that project is subject to the same local government permit fee schedule that would apply without the notice of intent.

(c2) Building permit holders utilizing the local inspection department for project inspections may in lieu of its use on a given inspection, and upon three days' notice to the inspection department, utilize a private commercial inspector to conduct the inspection due on the project and to issue an inspection report as provided in G.S. 160D-1105.1. Each use of a private commercial inspector under this subsection requires a separate notice to the inspection department. The notice may be given on the form utilized under subsection (c1) of this section. G.S. 160D-1105.1(b) applies to inspection reports issued under this subsection.

(c3) Except as provided in G.S. 160D-1105.2 and G.S. 160D-1105.3(c), a local government issuing a building permit for projects to be inspected by private commercial inspectors shall not conduct inspections on the project for compliance with the State Building Code or otherwise interfere, directly or indirectly, with the private commercial inspection process. The local government issuing the permit shall conduct the inspections on the project necessary to determine compliance with any local law applicable to the construction of commercial buildings or structures.

...."

SECTION 3.(l) G.S. 160D-1112 reads as rewritten:

"§ 160D-1112. Changes in ~~work~~-work or permit.

After a building permit has been issued, no changes or deviations from the terms of the application, plans and specifications, or the permit, except where changes or deviations are clearly permissible under the State Building Code, shall be made until specific written approval of proposed changes or deviations has been obtained from the inspection department. A building permit shall be amended to designate the use of or changes in the designated private commercial inspector or private commercial inspection firm."

SECTION 3.(m) G.S. 160D-1116 reads as rewritten:

"§ 160D-1116. Certificates of compliance; 30-days' or less notice; temporary certificates of occupancy.

(a) At the conclusion of all work done under a building permit, the appropriate ~~inspector~~ inspector, including a private commercial inspector, if applicable, shall make a final inspection, and, if the completed work complies with all applicable State and local laws and with the terms of the permit, ~~the inspector~~ shall issue a certificate of ~~compliance~~. compliance provided that private commercial inspectors may only issue certificates of compliance with the State Building Code. Except as provided by subsection (b) of this section, no new building or part thereof may be occupied, no addition or enlargement of an existing building may be occupied, and no existing building that has been altered or moved may be occupied, until the inspection department or the private commercial inspector, if applicable, has issued a certificate of compliance. Certificates of compliance issued by private commercial inspectors shall be on the form developed by the North Carolina Code Officials Qualification Board in the Office of the State Fire Marshal under G.S. 160D-1105.5.

(a1) Within 30 days from the date a private commercial inspector anticipates issuing a certificate of compliance pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, the private commercial inspector shall notify the applicable local government in writing by electronic mail, first-class mail, or physical delivery of the date the inspector anticipates issuing a certificate of compliance with the State Building Code.

(a2) Private commercial inspectors issuing a certificate of compliance with the State Building Code shall provide the local government with a copy of that certificate by electronic mail, first-class mail, or physical delivery, and its receipt shall be promptly acknowledged by the local government through reciprocal means.

(b) A temporary certificate of occupancy may be issued by the local government permitting occupancy for a stated period of time of either the entire building or of specified portions of the building if the local government inspector finds that the building may safely be occupied prior to its final completion. A permit holder may request and be issued a temporary certificate of occupancy if the conditions and requirements of the North Carolina State Building Code are met. Only a local government may issue a certificate of occupancy or a temporary certificate of occupancy.

(b1) A certificate of occupancy shall not be withheld on any project solely because a certificate of compliance has been issued by a private commercial inspector under this Article.

(b2) Upon issuing a certificate of occupancy or temporary certificate of occupancy under this section for any commercial project in which a private commercial inspector has issued a

certificate of compliance, the local government or State Fire Marshal may rely on the private commercial inspector's certificate of compliance that the completed work is in compliance with the State Building Code, and the local government or State Fire Marshal, its inspection departments, and its inspectors shall be immune from and discharged and released from any liabilities, duties, and responsibilities imposed by this Article with respect to or in common law from any claim arising out of or attributed to the certificate of compliance.

(c) Any person who owns, leases, or controls a building and occupies or allows the occupancy of the building or a part of the building before a certificate of compliance or temporary certificate of occupancy has been issued pursuant to ~~subsection (a) or (b) of this section~~ is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor."

SECTION 4.(a) G.S. 160D-1110.1 reads as rewritten:

"§ 160D-1110.1. Commercial and multifamily building permits for applications with sealed plans; third-party plan review alternatives; at-risk building foundation permits; at-risk building structure permits

...

(d) Independent Third-Party Review to Assist Local Government. – ~~A-Provided that the review does not exceed the time prescribed by subsection (c) of this section, a local government may utilize and contract with a-any of the following to perform independent third-party plan reviews under this section:~~

(1) ~~A licensed professional engineer or licensed architect certified under G.S. 143-151.13(f) to perform independent third-party plan review under this section, provided that the review time does not exceed the time frame prescribed by subsection (c) of this section.~~ G.S. 143-151.13(f).

(2) ~~A private commercial inspector certified under G.S. 143-151.14A and registered under G.S. 143-151.19A.~~

(e) Independent Third-Party Review Election by Permit Applicant. – If a local government initially undertakes plan review of the submitted plans and does not issue a building permit decision or determines it is unable to complete plan review within the time frame prescribed by subsection (c) of this section, a permit applicant may subsequently elect to utilize and contract with a licensed professional engineer or licensed architect certified under G.S. 143-151.13(f) to perform an independent third-party plan review. Upon the local government's receipt of a completed plan review with certification required by subsection (f) of this section, the local government shall issue applicable building permits for the project within three business days and will refund or waive all applicable plan review and permit fees for the project upon issuance of the applicable building permits.

...."

SECTION 5. G.S. 160D-403 reads as rewritten:

"§ 160D-403. Administrative development approvals and determinations.

(a) Development Approvals. – To the extent consistent with the scope of regulatory authority granted by this Chapter, no person shall commence or proceed with development without first securing any required development approval from the local government with jurisdiction over the site of the development. A development approval shall be in writing and may contain a provision requiring the development to comply with all applicable State and local laws. A local government may issue development approvals in print or electronic form. Any development approval issued exclusively in electronic form shall be protected from further editing once issued. Applications for development approvals may be made by the landowner, a lessee or person holding an option or contract to purchase or lease land, or an authorized agent of the landowner. An easement holder may also apply for development approval for such development as is authorized by the easement.

(a1) Concurrent Review for Development Approvals. – To the extent consistent with the scope of regulatory authority granted by this Chapter, to lessen the time required to obtain all

1 necessary approvals from a local government with jurisdiction over the site of the development,
2 the local government shall ensure development approval processes run concurrently with other
3 applications or processes for approvals notwithstanding that related development approvals for
4 the project have not yet been obtained.

5"

6 **SECTION 6.(a)** G.S. 143-139.4 is repealed.

7 **SECTION 6.(b)** G.S. 160D-402(d) reads as rewritten:

8 "(d) Financial Support. – The local government may appropriate for the support of the
9 staff any funds that it deems necessary. It shall have power to fix reasonable fees for support,
10 administration, and implementation of programs authorized by this Chapter, and all such fees
11 shall be used for no other purposes. ~~When an inspection, for which the permit holder has paid a~~
12 ~~fee to the local government, is performed by a marketplace pool Code enforcement official upon~~
13 ~~request of the State Fire Marshal under G.S. 143-151.12(9)a., the local government shall~~
14 ~~promptly return to the permit holder the fee collected by the local government for such inspection.~~
15 ~~This subsection applies to the following types of inspection: plumbing, electrical systems,~~
16 ~~general building restrictions and regulations, heating and air conditioning, and the general~~
17 ~~construction of buildings."~~

18 **SECTION 7.** To implement the provisions of this act on the effective date of Sections
19 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 of this act, the Office of the State Fire Marshal may begin rulemaking no later
20 than 90 days after this act becomes law, but no rules shall become effective prior to July 1, 2026.

21 **SECTION 8.** Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 of this act become effective July 1, 2026. The
22 remainder of this act is effective when it becomes law.